

The Advent Kids Devotional

25-day Advent readings and scriptures



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Introduction:

Welcome to The Advent Kids Devotional! Advent is the time of preparing your heart for the coming of Jesus. I created this journal for you to read with your family or perhaps you want to read and reflect all by yourself. The Christmas season can be so overwhelming with busy schedules, parties, shopping, lists, Christmas programs and so on. These can all be great, wonderful things, however, sometimes in the “busy” we forget to take time to reflect and be still, and we can lose sight of what Christmas is all about.

The heart of Christmas and what Christmas is really all about is love: Christ came because He loves us. These devotionals are meant to help focus your heart on how much Jesus loves you and the tremendous gift He gave you at Christmas. However, it’s not a gift that we are meant to keep all to ourselves. One of the greatest ways we can love Him in return is by loving and serving others and through that, we can share the love, message and gift of Jesus.

At the end of each devotional you will find some ideas for acts of kindness, service and love you can do with your family this Christmas. They are just ideas and suggestions to get you started, but the sky is the limit! In fact, we have a much larger list up on our website you can check out for more ideas. Maybe you can do just one of them this season or maybe you want to do something every day- whatever works for you.

The devotionals are to help you focus inwardly and the activities are to help you focus outwardly. Our dear friend, pastor and mentor, John Withem, used to always say that good deeds pave the way for the Good News. Look for the ways (small or large) that you can help pave the way this Christmas season.

I will be praying for you during this season of Advent as you reflect on the greatest story ever told. May you come to know even better how deeply you are loved by your Creator.

Love and Blessings,
Katie

www.theadventkids.com



Day 1

The people walking in the darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.

Isaiah 9:2

The time in history that Jesus was born into was spiritually very dark. The Jewish people had spent many, many years waiting for their promised Savior, nearly losing hope that He would ever come for them. Yet even when it is dark, even when it seems as though all hope is lost, God still has a plan. To announce Jesus' birth, God hung the brightest of stars in the heavens to tell the world that light will always overcome the darkness and no matter how dark it gets, there is always hope.

Activity:

One of our favorite Christmas traditions is to put our boys in their jammies, load in the car and drive around at night looking at Christmas lights. Everyone decorates their houses differently with colorful lights, or blinking lights, or lights that look like icicles hanging down from the gutters. It's such a fun Christmas tradition to put up lights on your house. Maybe your family puts lights up, too. It's a great reminder that Christmas is a time when we celebrate the day when the Light of the World was born. If looking at lights is a tradition for your family, too, this year leave a note on the doorstep of the house with your favorite light display- thanking the owners for taking the time to put up a beautiful Christmas display for all to see.



Day 2

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about...

Matthew 1:18a

God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee to [a young woman named Mary who was] pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David

Luke 1:26b-27a

Before you were born, your parents were filled with joy and anticipation of your arrival. They got your room ready, picked a name for you and did all the preparations necessary to get ready to bring you home. They counted down the days with excitement and wonder imagining what you would look like, what your personality would be like and when you would be born.

God's people lived with the same anticipation waiting for Jesus to come. God had promised hundreds of years earlier that He would send them a Messiah, a Savior that would rescue them. They, too, wondered what He would look like, what kind of Savior He would be and when He would come. Never in their wildest dreams did they imagine their Savior would come as baby, but that's just what happened.

Do you do anything special as you prepare for Christmas? Do you decorate your house? Do you shop for gifts? Do you hang Christmas lights? We all have our own traditions as we prepare our hearts and homes for Christmas.

Activity:

One favorite in our home is that we watch a lot of Christmas movies. Do you have a favorite Christmas movie? Charlie Brown's Christmas is one of our very favorites. Maybe this year as you plan a Christmas movie night, invite a friend over to join you. After all, the story of Christmas is meant to be shared!



Day 3

The angel (Gabriel) went to [Mary] and said “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”

Luke 1:28

Try and imagine what it would be like to be standing face to face with an angel. How do you think Mary felt? I am sure she was a little scared since she'd never seen an angel before and I would imagine she was very surprised. Mary was going about her day as usual, never imagining an angel would visit her, but that's just what happened.

That is just how God works, isn't it? He takes the regular and ordinary and turns them into something extraordinary. He isn't looking for people who are perfect, He is looking for people who love Him and are willing.

Activity:

Take some time today to share the love of Christmas by surprising someone in your life with an unexpected gift. Maybe you could bring an extra snack to school to share with a friend, rake leaves for a neighbor or simply sit next to someone new at school- all of these are ways you can unexpectedly share the heart of Christmas with those around you.



Day 4

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid Mary; you have found favor with God.”

Luke 1:29-30

I often try and put myself in Mary's shoes and imagine how she thought or felt. She was raised in a culture waiting for their Savior, nearly losing hope that He would ever come for them. I'm sure she never imagined that she would be a part of the great miracle of her Savior coming to earth, but that is how her story unfolded. God had a great and wonderful, beautiful plan for Mary's life- one beyond anything she could have ever dreamed or imagined.

Mary got to be a part of God working a great miracle and bringing hope to the world. And do you know what? There are great miracles God wants to work and hope He wants to bring through you- and ONLY YOU! God has an amazing plan for your life that only YOU can fulfill.

Activity:

One way you can share the hope of Christmas is by adopting a family in need. Maybe you know of a family at school, in your sports league or even at your church that could use some extra help this Christmas (if you don't know of anyone personally, ask your local church). It doesn't have to be extravagant, but maybe you buy some extra groceries, make each family member a card or even invite them over to share a dinner with your family this Christmas season. No one has your exact friends, family, neighbors and classmates. The same hope Mary helped bring into the world that first Christmas- God wants YOUR help bringing it to the world THIS Christmas.



Day 5

“You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and He will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever, his kingdom will never end.”

Luke 1:31-33

There are a lot of traditions, decorations and symbols we use during the Christmas season that reflect the story of Jesus’ birth. Christmas cookies, the Christmas tree, candles, and even the Christmas wreath speak of the true meaning of Christmas.

The traditional Christmas wreath is made from evergreen and holly branches. The evergreen branches represent life and are tied together in a circle to represent eternal life- with no beginning and no end. The reign of Jesus and His love will never end. The holly branches used in between symbolize the crown of thorns Jesus wore when he was crucified and the berries symbolize the blood he shed on the cross. Even the wreath on your front door whispers His name.

Activity:

What is a tradition that your family does every year? Do you decorate gingerbread houses? Maybe this year you can invite a friend to join you. Do you bake cookies? Maybe bake extra to bring to a neighbor. Do you go Christmas shopping? Maybe this year offer to shop for an elderly friend or a family that has a new baby. Pick any tradition your family does and find a way to use that tradition to share the love of Jesus.



Day 6

“The days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land.”

Jeremiah 23:5

Just like the Christmas wreath, the evergreen tree symbolizes life. Sometimes people talk about a “family tree”, like in this passage of scripture that comes from one of the Old Testament prophets (prophets were people God chose to share His messages). The branch that God was talking about here is the family tree of King David. You see, God promised long before Jesus was born that His Son would come from King David’s family tree.

What is beautiful about Christmas trees is they have beautiful green branches that spread wide just like the arms of Jesus and they stand up tall, pointing straight to Heaven. And when we decorate them with Christmas lights, we are remembering the time the Light of the World was born.

Activity:

A fun Christmas activity you can do with your family is to decorate a tree in your yard or nearby park for the wild animals. You can make bird feeders with pinecones, peanut butter and birdseed. You could make big popcorn strings to hang in the trees. Get creative! It’s a fun way to care for the animals this time of year that often have a harder time finding food in the winter. The Bible says that God cares for the sparrows and makes sure they are fed- and you can help!



Day 7

“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her.

Luke 1:38

The day before before Jesus was crucified, He spent the evening with His closest friends. To show them just how much He loved them, He took the time to wash each of His friends’ feet- their nasty, stinky, dirty, well traveled feet (which was often the job of a servant). The King of Kings, the One who created those very feet, knelt down and showed the world what kind of Savior He really is; a Servant King. He loved people and He served people. In Matthew chapter 20 the Bible says: “...the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mat. 20:28).

Mary had the heart of a servant just like Jesus. She was willing to love and serve God with all of her heart and life and she did just that. God sure picked the best mom for Jesus, didn’t He?

Activity:

Do you know of people in your life that have the heart of a servant? People that are the first to help those in need, volunteer their time to serve others, or those that do jobs no one else wants to do? Think of the janitors at your school or church, your Sunday school teachers, or your trash collectors. Take some time to write a note of thanks to someone you know that has the heart of a servant.



Day 8

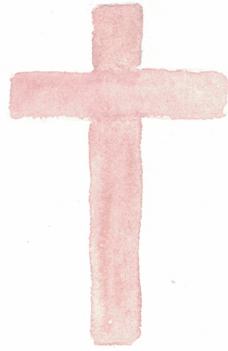
His (Jesus') mother was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

Matthew 1:18b-19

I love reading about Joseph- He is one of my favorite characters in the Bible- a simple carpenter who loved and served God with all of his heart. He must have been such a great man for God to choose him to raise His Son. You see Jesus was truly God's Son, which meant that Joseph was Jesus' adopted, earthly father. Joseph chose to raise and love Jesus, just like God chooses and loves each one of us.

Activity:

Some kids are much less fortunate than others. Some have lost parents or their parents have faced challenges of many kinds. This season, take some time to go through your closets and donate some gently used clothes and toys that you don't wear or play with anymore. You can donate them to your local foster care, pregnancy support or even your local church. It's a great way to help bless children and families less fortunate than you.



Day 9

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said: “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

Matthew 1:20-21

My Grandma has the most beautiful nativity set she puts out in her dining room each Christmas. What’s unusual about her nativity set is that it always includes a cross. She says “Ruth Graham always said that every Nativity set should include a cross because Jesus was born to die.” That is the beautiful, sobering truth about Christmas. Jesus’ birth was hope being born, but Jesus’ death and resurrection was hope realized. The Christmas story just isn’t complete without the cross.

Jesus’ name even means “God saves”. The great and wonderful plan that God had for Jesus’ life was that He would be the Savior of the world, the greatest hero of all time.

Activity:

Do you have any heroes in your life? People that are the first to step in and help even if it’s dangerous? Take some time to thank the heroes in your life. We have a tradition in our family that each time we see an emergency responder or person in a military uniform we stop them and say “thank you for keeping us safe”. It’s a simple way of showing your appreciation for those who protect us every day.



Day 10

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet (Isaiah): “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means ‘God with us’).

Matthew 1:22-23

Do you have any favorite books- ones that you could read over and over again? Did you know that there were books written about Jesus’ birth long before He was born? There are many books in the Old Testament of the Bible written by prophets (God’s messengers we talked about earlier). Many of the messages they shared were about the coming of the Messiah’s (Jesus’) birth. It’s fun to go back and read stories/prophecies and see how Jesus fulfilled each and every one.

The greatest thing about the story of Christmas is that it is true! And just like the prophets shared God’s messages, we need to share the story of Christmas with those around us.

Activity:

One great way to do that is by giving someone you love a book (new or used) about the real meaning of Christmas. It could be someone you know or simply a donation to your local library. Maybe you could even find a group of people to donate Bibles to our military servicemen/women overseas. Giving books is a great way to share the message of Christmas.



Day 11

When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.

Matthew 1:24

The story of Christmas all began with a family- an ordinary, imperfect, wonderful family. What does your family look like? Do you have a brother or a sister? Do you have lots of siblings or are you an only child? Some families even live with their grandma or grandpa. Everyone's family looks a little different; no two families are exactly the same.

Activity:

Let's pick a day this Christmas called "family kindness day". Each member of your family (that lives with you) picks another family member to do something kind for. Maybe you help your mom with the laundry or your sister make her bed. Be creative! Take some time to be kind to those you are around everyday.



Day 12

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David.

Luke 2:1-4

The angel Gabriel spoke to both Mary and Joseph and they believed the message that God had for them. However, I imagine that many (or most!) of the people around them thought they were crazy. Nearly all the people around them didn't understand what was happening- I'm sure even Mary and Joseph found it hard to believe at times. I imagine Mary and Joseph might have felt very lonely at times (or a lot of the time), but they clung to the faith they had that what God told them was true.

Have you ever felt lonely before? Have you ever been the new person in a situation where everyone else already knew each other? Maybe you had to change schools or move towns. There are times in our lives when we all feel lonely. Even Jesus Himself felt lonely at the end of His life on the cross.

Activity:

This Christmas season, reach out to someone you think might be lonely. Maybe you know of a new person at school and you offer to sit with them at lunch. Maybe you know of someone who will be alone at Christmas- invite them over to join your family dinner. College students away from home, military servicemen/women stationed far away, and people who have lost a loved one are often alone at Christmas. It's especially hard to be lonely at Christmas when most everyone around you is spending time with their family and friends. Taking the time to befriend someone who is lonely is a great way to share the love and message of Jesus.



Day 13

He (Joseph) went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

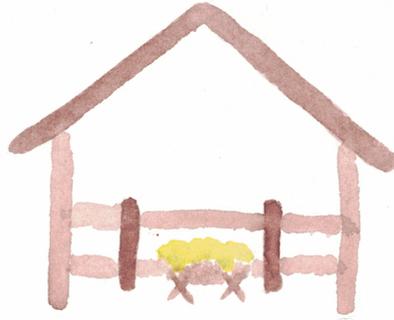
Luke 2:5

One of my very favorite things about the Bible is how God uses the imperfect, the flawed, the outcasts, the unexpected “nobodies” to share His message– and the story of Jesus’ birth was no exception. Joseph was a simple carpenter and Mary was a young woman from a little nothing farming town in the hills of Galilee and yet God chose to use them to bring His Son into the world.

Don’t ever think that you are too imperfect, too flawed, too old or too young for God to use you. All He is looking for is someone who trusts Him and is willing to step out in faith. Mary and Joseph were not perfect, but they believed God and trusted Him and God used them to bring the greatest miracle of all time.

Activity:

Can you think of a way that God can use you this Christmas to share His message of love? Maybe invite a friend to your church or to your Christmas program and I bet they will come because they know and love you. They may hear about the love of Jesus for the very first time and come to know Him as their Lord and Savior. And just think- you can be a part of God’s great miracle in their life!



Day 14

While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

Luke 2:6-7

He's here! He's here!! Go shout it from the rooftop; go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ, the Light of the World, is born!

I am sure as Mary and Joseph held baby Jesus in their arms they looked in wonder at the great miracle God had brought into the world. I am sure they counted each of His little fingers and each of His tiny toes over and over again. I am sure they listened intently to each little noise He made and watched every new little expression on His face. God had given them a beautiful baby boy.

However, I am sure their excitement and joy was mixed with some fear and anxiety. What was going to happen next? He wasn't just their little boy- He was the promised Messiah, God's own son. But one thing was for sure- Mary and Joseph trusted God. They knew that no matter what the future held, God would take care of them. After all, the reason He sent Jesus was because of His great love for Mary and Joseph, for His people and for you and me.

Activity:

One great activity to do as a family (if you haven't already done so) is to set up a nativity set in a special place in your home. It's a great way to show that Jesus is the center of your home and the center of Christmas. It's a small way of sharing the Christmas story to all who come inside.



Day 15

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end.

Isaiah 9:6-7a

The name Jesus means “God saves”. He is also referred to by many other names throughout the Bible. Another name for Jesus is “Immanuel” which means “God with us”. The King of Kings, the Creator of the universe, has come near. And He is always near, never far away, whenever we need Him.

He’s also called “Wonderful Counselor”. Our personal Savior, always near, and always ready to listen. He cares deeply about the intimate depths of our hearts. He weeps with us when we are sad and dries every tear from our eyes. I believe He rejoices with us in times of great celebration. He is for us and with us and ready with a band-aid and gentle wisdom when we fall down and scrape our knees.

Activity:

What is one way you can show that you care for someone you love? Take a few minutes and write a note of encouragement to someone in your life (maybe a friend at school, a family member, etc,) telling them why you love them and what you think is great about them. It’s a simple and personal way to build someone else up and to share the love of Jesus.



Day 16

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

Luke 2:8-12

You're hard-pressed to find anyone more dedicated, hard working, protective and passionate than farmers. These particular farmers were shepherds, which meant they watched over their flock of sheep. Being a shepherd is a 365-day a year job making sure that their flock is safe and cared for and out of harm's way. They know their sheep and they do their jobs very well.

On this night they were watching over their sheep, just like they had always done. But this was no ordinary night. God took their ordinary night and turned it into something extraordinary. Can you imagine those shepherds lying down talking about their day when suddenly the sky was filled with angels singing? What a sight to behold!

Activity:

Another group of people who work tirelessly day in and a day out are postal workers. They have a very important job, but people don't often think about or appreciate the job they do. Every day, rain or shine, they deliver the mail to our houses. This time of year they work extra hard to make sure everyone gets mail and packages on time. Take some time today to write a note of thanks (maybe even include a treat) telling your postal worker how much you appreciate all their hard work. You could even leave the note in your mailbox for them to find as a surprise. Take a few minutes to take their ordinary day and turn it into something extraordinary.



Day 17

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

Luke 2:13-14

Do you have any favorite Christmas songs? They say that one of the greatest ways to spread Christmas cheer is singing loud for all to hear! Even the angels couldn't help but sing aloud the great news that Jesus was born.

Activity:

A great way to spread Christmas cheer is by getting a group together and going Christmas caroling. One of the best places to go caroling is at a nursing home or retirement center. People living in those kinds of homes are often lonely at Christmas and what better way to bring joy to their Christmas than singing joyous carols of Jesus' birth. If you can't make it out to a nursing home to sing, call an elderly loved one on the phone and sing to them over the phone.



Day 18

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread word concerning what had been told them about this child and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

Luke 2:15-20

Have you ever been so excited to share special news with someone that you could hardly wait? I remember when we found out we were expecting our boys- I could hardly wait to tell our friends and family the good news. I can imagine how excited the shepherds were after they saw Jesus for the first time. Not only did they get to see Jesus themselves, but God had picked them to be the first to see Him! They could hardly wait to tell everyone the good news.

That's how it is when you come to know the love of Jesus for yourself. It's so exciting and so wonderful that you can't keep the news to yourself.

Activity:

Take some time to make a "Merry Christmas" sign for your entire neighborhood to see. You could use sidewalk chalk (weather permitting), you could make a sign to hang in your window or hang down from a tree. Be creative! Share with your neighborhood how excited you are that Christmas is here!



Day 19

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose in the east and have come to worship him.”

Matthew 2:1-2

A star will come out of Jacob....A ruler will come out of Jacob.

Numbers 24:17b & 19a

To announce the royal birth of God’s Son, He hung the brightest of all stars to shine in the heavens; a beacon of light in a very dark world. The Bible says that all of creation shouts the praises of the Lord and the Christmas star was no exception.

Just as the star lit the way to Jesus, your service to others can light the way to Jesus. My dear friend and Pastor, John, used to always say that good deeds can often pave the way for the Good News. Try and think of ways that you can serve others as you go about your day today.

Activity:

Here are some ideas of good deeds you could do this season: you can offer to help walk a neighbor’s dog, help straighten the carts for the grocery store employees, or give a cup of cocoa/coffee to your trash collector. You never know what good deed may just light the way for the good news of Jesus.



Day 20

When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet (Micah) has written: But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel." Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

Matthew 2:3-8

"Come, thou long expected Jesus. Born to set thy people free." The culture Jesus was born into had been waiting for their promised Messiah for what seemed like an eternity. They were expecting a valiant king with a mighty army to come for them. A political savior. It's what they'd always known. What they were not expecting was a baby, born in a barn, who would eventually ride into Jerusalem on a donkey and offer their hearts freedom. Not a government king, but rather a Prince of Peace. Jesus, although He was expected, came so unexpectedly. Sometimes it's in the unexpected that we find what our hearts were searching for all along. Find a way to share the hope of Jesus in an unexpected way this Christmas.

Activity:

Something our family does (that your family may like to do, too) is to put together homeless care packages that we keep in our car all winter long (although you could do this all year long). We pack a bag filled with granola bars, new socks, wipes, toothbrushes, hand warmers, and so on. Most homeless people asking for help expect to be turned down or for people to avoid making eye contact with them. When we encounter someone in need, we offer them one of our care packages, look them in the eye and say "Merry Christmas, God loves you". Sharing Jesus in the unexpected.



Day 21

After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him.

Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

Matthew 2:9-12

Do you ever wonder why we give gifts at Christmas? We are remembering the time when the Wise Men brought gifts to Jesus. They brought the most precious gifts they had to give to Jesus. What kind of gifts do you think Jesus would want from you this Christmas? The Bible says that the greatest commandment of all is to love the Lord with all your heart and the second greatest commandment is to love our neighbors as ourselves. One of the greatest ways to love God is to share His love with others around us. That's why we encourage acts of Christmas kindness each day. We are bringing the most precious gift we have (ourselves), giving the gifts He has given us (talents, time, etc.), and using those gifts to love and serve other people.

Activity:

What is one way you can use your gifts to serve someone else today? Are you good at gift-wrapping? Offer to help wrap gifts for someone who could use the help. Are you good at shoveling snow? Offer to shovel snow for a neighbor who could use the help. God has gifted you with talents and abilities that you are uniquely good at. Find a way to use those gifts to bless others today.



Day 22

When they (Magi) had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up,” he said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.” So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet (Hosea): “Out of Egypt I called my son.”

Matthew 2:13-15

After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said “Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child’s life are dead.” So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel...he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.

Matthew 2:19-21a, 23

In the joy and celebration of the season, I think sometimes we forget the circumstances that Jesus was born into that first Christmas. Jesus was born in a barn, to a young mother, married to a man that was not His father, in a society in desperate need of a Savior who had nearly given up hope, under the reign of a king who tried to have Him killed, and unto a people that eventually DID kill him. Not the merry Christmas you and I always think of, right?

Yet somehow, God took all that sadness and brokenness and despair and birthed HOPE into the world. Through all the imperfect mess, God worked the greatest miracle of all.

Often times Christmas can be stressful or disappointing or just plain TOO BUSY! Sometimes Christmas can be a reminder of loved ones we lost too soon and memories we missed out on making. Yet even in the toughest and saddest of times, He is there. Even on the darkest of days, there is light. He is deeply good and He promises that we are never alone.

Activity:

Think of some way that you can share that hope with someone else today. Maybe hold the door open for someone at school or let someone in line in front of you at the store or offer to pray for someone who is having a hard day. This time of year, although wonderful, is sometimes very difficult. Find a way to share the hope and love of Christmas with someone who really needs it.



Day 23

And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him.... And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.

Luke 2:40, 52

Sometimes when we tell the story of Christmas, we end with His birth or maybe with the visit of the wise men. But it's important to remember that Jesus didn't stay a baby. He grew up and into the great purpose that God had for His life; the Savior of the world, the Prince of Peace and the King of Kings. Just like God had a great plan for Jesus' life, He has a great and wonderful plan for your life that only you can fulfill; He has miracles He wants to work through you and only you. Not before nor will there ever be anyone else just like you.

Activity:

Throughout your day today, try smiling at everyone you see and wishing them all a "Merry Christmas". No one else will interact/see all the same people today that you will. It's your opportunity to share the love of Christmas with those that God brings into your path. You never know how something so simple can help turn someone's day completely around and help start the miracle God is trying to work in their life.



Day 24

For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16

This past Easter during Bible time at school, my oldest son's teacher was sharing the story of the cross. She gave the kids "resurrection eggs" filled with great tactile symbols of the days leading up to and following Jesus' death and resurrection. When they got to the nails she said "and these represent the nails that held Jesus on the cross." My son interrupted her story and says "oh, but teacher, it wasn't the nails that held Jesus to the cross- it was love." Isn't that the truth? My son, at only 5 years of age, gets it.

The reason that Jesus came at Christmas, the reason He died upon the cross and rose from the grave is because of love. The greatest gift isn't wrapped beneath a tree or waiting at a fancy department store with an expensive price tag. The greatest gift of all is the gift of Jesus- free to all who trust and believe. Always remember that God loves you more than you could ever imagine. You can't earn it, you can't lose it- nothing can change His love for you.

Activity:

Find a missionary group that you would like to support throughout the year. It could be a through your local church, something national or international. One of our very favorite things we do as a family is support a child through Compassion International. For \$38 a month, we help provide our friend Beni (who lives in Rwanda) with an opportunity to attend school, get medical attention, have food to eat and an opportunity to hear about the love of Jesus. Supporting a missionary group year round is a great way to carry the spirit of Advent throughout your entire year.



Day 25

You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Matthew 5:14-16

Not only did Jesus call Himself the Light of the World, He said that we, TOO, are the light of the world. We get to be part of God's great love story and shine out His light.

Never, ever forget that the heart of Christmas is love: Christ came because He loves us and one of the greatest ways we can love Him in return is by loving and serving others. Look for the ways, both big and small, to BE the light to those around you. Live out the spirit of Advent all year long. Merry Christmas!